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Attitudes toward Highway Conditions, Operations, and Taxation

Submitted to the

Montana Department of Highways

December 1980

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WESTERN ANALYSIS
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Revenue in the highway earmarked account is matched by federal funds collected through a federal 4-cent-per-gallon gas tax and allocated to the states according to a formula. The Department of Highways does not receive any money from the state general fund.

The department's reliance upon earmarked and federal revenue to fund its operation is both a blessing and a curse. Not having to rely on general fund appropriations largely insulates the department from the biennial competition with other state agencies to receive its share of fiscal resources from the legislature. On the other hand, when the federal government restricts the distribution of highway funds from the Federal Highway Administration, as it has recently, or if fuel consumption drops, as it has recently also, the department has no stabilizing state general fund appropriation. Historically, the department's revenue stream has proven stable. That pattern has now changed because of gasoline shortages, fuel prices, and embargoes of federal funds, and the added pressure of inflation to what has become an unstable revenue stream necessitates a change in how the department funds its operations.

Table 1 shows the gasoline tax rate, gallons sold, and gas tax collections during the past five fiscal years. Note the variability in the number of gallons sold. Between FY 76 and FY 80, gas tax revenue increased 13.7%. During that period, the Consumer Price Index, a national measure of inflation, increased 44.6%.

Table 1

A Five-Year Summary of Gas Taxation in Montana

Year	Tax Rate Per Gallon	Gallons** Sold	Gas Tax Revenue Collection
FY 80	9 cents	416,139,560	$ 37,455,256
FY 79	9 cents*	431,291,510	36,532,927
FY 78	8 cents	466,624,940	37,329,995
FY 77	8 cents	434,762,690	34,781,015
FY 76	7-3/4 cents	425,015,520	32,938,703

* 9-cent tax for one-half year.

** Estimated

Table 2 shows the total amount of revenue received and total amounts expended from the highway earmarked account. (The revenue shown here differs from that shown in table 1 because gasoline taxes constitute only a part of the total revenue received by the highway earmarked account.) In the face of 45% inflation, revenue to the account increased by only 33.7%. Expenditures during the same five years increased 52.2%.

Table 2

A Five-Year Summary of Highway Earmarked Account Revenue and Expenditures

Year	Revenue	Expenditure
FY 80	$ 74,255,796	$ 81,812,608
FY 79	69,087,906	67,764,063
FY 78	67,601,116	67,297,912
FY 77	61,897,281	61,532,794
FY 76	55,551,294	53,752,769

At the close of FY 80, the highway earmarked account held a cash balance of $12.9 million and was expected to drop to almost nothing by the close of the current biennium. According to preliminary budget projections, the account would be some $25.9 million in the red if current rates of receipts and expenditures were maintained. However, Montana's constitution requires the submission of a balanced budget with proposed expenditures not to exceed anticipated revenue, and the actual budget recommendation submitted by the Governor to the Forty-seventh Legislature will maintain a positive cash balance in the highway earmarked account.

Combine the tightening of revenue with the prospect of increasing costs and the conclusion is clear: the Department of Highways must improve its source of revenue, revise its program to reduce costs, or both.

Highway Needs

Montana's highway construction and maintenance needs fall into three classes:

1. Minor construction and maintenance of existing highways.
2. Completion of the Interstate Highway System.
3. Reconstruction of portions of the Primary Highway System.

Montana's highway system includes 11,675 miles of road, 65,000 signs, and 2,250 bridges that require patching, repair, snowplowing, and minor construction. In FY 80, the department's Maintenance Division had 692 FTE employees and an annual budget of $30.1 million. Five years ago the budget was only $19.0 million, and there were 646 FTE employees.

Montana's Interstate Highway Stystem is still not complete. When originally designed in the mid-1950's, Montana was scheduled to have 1,196 miles of Interstate in three highways: I-15 (north-south) and I-90 and I-94 (east-west). To date, 1,080 miles have been completed. The expected cost of completing the remaining 116 miles is $225 million, of which 90% would come from the federal government.

Montana's Primary Highway System, consisting of roads such as U.S. 2, U.S. 12, Montana 200, U.S. 93, U.S. 191, U.S. 212, and others, is old; many parts should be rebuilt. Of the 5,449 miles that make up the primary system, 60% are over twenty years old and were not engineered for today's highway traffic. A recent road sufficiency study conducted buy the department's Planning and Research Bureau revealed that 27.5% or 1,500 miles of the primary system is in need of total reconstruction. The portions that need rebuilding are scattered evenly across the state. In each of the state's twelve highway financial districts, 25% to 30% of the primary highways are in need of reconstruction. The cost of rebuilding the primary highway system is currently estimated to be $750 million over a ten-year period.

So: despite an increasingly tight budget that the department must learn to plan for, it must not let these three classes of needs go unmet. Finding the balance will not be easy. Perhaps there are alternative ways to finance needed construction or maintenance.

Section 60-3-203 divides Montana into twelve financial districts. All money available to the department for highway construction is apportioned to the districts according to land area, population, road mileage and other factors. The financial districts were created to ensure equality among the several sections of the state in the use of highway funds.

To help in its self-evaluation and planning, the Highway Department commissioned a public opinion survey to assess the public's attitudes about highway needs and the neans of financing future programs.

THE SURVEY

The survey assessed the attitudes of Montana motor vehicle owners about the Interstate Highway System, the Primary Highway System, road maintenance and snowplowing, reduced levels of funding for some state programs, and methods of financing highway operations. Also included were background questions regarding the types and numbers of vehicles participants owned, miles driven per year, and place of residence.

The questionnaire consisted of 25 forced-choice questions and one open-ended question inviting the respondents to provide additional thoughts or ideas regarding Montana's highways. The questionnaire, the initial cover letter, and the follow-up letter are appended to this report.

A systematic random sample was drawn from the current 1979-80 list of automobile registrations by choosing every 500th personal automobile registration in each county. Commercial registrations were excluded. The sampling procedure yielded 1,985 potential respondents.

The survey packets, consisting of a cover letter signed by the director of the Department of Highways, questionnaire, and postage-paid return envelope were mailed on September 15, 1980. A follow-up reminder to complete and return the survey was mailed 14 days later on October 2, 1980. Only questionnaires returned before October 25, 1980, were included in the analysis. By that date, 1,198 questionnaires had been returned, three of them spoiled or otherwise unusable. Fifty-two questionnaires were

undeliverable by the U. S. Postal Service. Thus, the 1,195 usable, completed questionnaires yielded a response rate of 61.8%.

In this report, the responses to the survey are presented as percentages reflecting the viewpoint of the state, commission district, or financial district. To find out how closely this sample percentage represents the true (but unknown) real-world value, a statistical analysis of the total number of respondents and the possible percentages was conducted. This analysis indicates that about 95 out of 100 times, the reported percentage for the total survey sample differs from the unknown percentage for the state's population of motor vehicle owners by no more than ±3%. When the size of the sample decreases (when percentages are reported for the commission and financial districts, for example), the level of imprecision increases.

Thus, if more than 53% of the total number of respondents favor a certain issue, one can be nearly certain that, in the entire population of Montana motor vehicle owners, a majority would favor it. Of course, the larger the percentage reported for the survey sample, the larger the majority in the population. When two reported percentages in response to the same question are nearly equal, the results are "too close to call," meaning that the real-world difference between the two is so small that the survey will not detect it with certainty. This report should be read and interpreted with these measures of precision in mind.

The results of the survey are reported by topic in the following sections. In the tables, each question is displayed along with the response, in percentages, for each answer category. The response is tabulated for the state and for each commission and financial district; in some cases, the response is cross-tabulated with selected background variables. Tables 3 and 4 describe the highway commission districts and financial districts.

The distribution of the sample of survey respondents closely matched the population distribution of the five highway commission districts and twelve financial districts. Table 5 shows the population distribution by commission and financial district, the number of questionnaires returned, and the survey response rate.

The questionnaire asked respondents how many miles they drive each year and how many motor vehicles they own. The majority (52.6%) of Montana motor vehicle owners drive between 5,000 and 15,000 miles per year. Over 17% of the vehicle owners drive more than 20,000 miles per year while only 10% drive fewer than 5,000 miles per year. Almost 83% of the sample reported owning more than one motor vehicle. Ownership of two vehicles, the most common response, was reported by 39.9% of the vehicle owners. See tables 6 and 7 for additional details.

Table 3

Commission Districts

Section 2-15-2502 MCA divides the State of Montana into five commission districts. The commission is designated as a quasi-judicial board as prescribed by Section 2-15-124 MCA.

Commission District #1: Northwest Montana

Lincoln, Lake, Flathead, Sanders, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli, Granite, Lewis and Clark, Jefferson, Broadwater counties

Commission District #2: Southwest Montana

Powell, Deer Lodge, Silver Bow, Beaverhead, Madison, Gallatin, Park, Sweet Grass, Wheatland, Meagher counties

Commission District #3: North Central Montana

Glacier, Toole, Liberty, Hill, Blaine, Choteau, Pondera, Teton, Cascade, Judith Basin counties

Commission District #4: Northeast Montana

Fergus, Petroleum, Garfield, Prairie, Wibaux, Dawson, McCone, Richland, Roosevelt, Sheridan, Daniels, Valley, Phillips counties

Commission District #5: Southeast Montana

Golden Valley, Musselshell, Stillwater, Carbon, Yellowstone, Big Horn, Treasure, Rosebud, Custer, Fallon, Powder River, Carter counties

Table 4

Financial Districts

Section 60-3-203 MCA divides the State of Montana highway system into twelve financial districts. All money available to the department for highway construction is apportioned to the districts on the basis of land area, population, road mileage, and other factors. The financial districts were created to ensure equality among the several sections of the state in the use of highway funds.

Financial District #1
Lincoln, Lake, Flathead counties

Financial District #2
Glacier, Toole, Liberty Hill, Blaine counties

Financial District #3
Phillips, Valley, Daniels Sheridan, Roosevelt counties

Financial District #4
Richland, Dawson, McCone Prairie, Wibaux counties

Financial District #5
Garfield, Petroleum, Fergus counties

Financial District #6
Judith Basin, Choteau, Cascade, Teton, Pondera counties

Financial District #7
Lewis & Clark, Broadwater, Jefferson counties

Financial District #8
Sanders, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli, Granite, Powell counties

Financial District #9
Deer Lodge, Silver Bow, Beaverhead, Madison counties

Financial District #10
Meagher, Wheatland, Gallatin, Park, Sweet Grass counties

Financial District #11
Golden Valley, Musselshell, Big Horn, Yellowstone, Stillwater, Carbon counties
Treasure

Financial District #12
Rosebud, Custer, Fallon, Powder River, Carter counties

Table 5

ommission and Financial District Populations and Survey Response Rate

District	1980 Population	Population as Percentage of State Population	Survey Question-naires Returned	Question-naire Return Rate
mmission District #1	254,430	32.5%	378	31.6%
mmission District #2	134,503	17.2%	211	17.7%
mmission District #3	145,058	18.5%	235	19.7%
mmission District #4	79,721	10.2%	143	12.0%
mmission District #5	169,962	21.7%	228	19.1%
tal	783,674	100.1%	1195	100.1%
nancial District #1	88,241	11.3%	141	11.8%
nancial District #2	42,473	5.4%	67	5.6%
nancial District #3	34,269	4.4%	64	5.4%
nancial District #4	30,094	3.8%	57	4.8%
nancial District #5	15,358	2.0%	26	2.2%
nancial District #6	102,585	13.1%	168	14.1%
nancial District #7	53,356	6.9%	70	5.9%
nancial District #8	119,722	15.3%	178	14.9%
nancial District #9	64,078	8.2%	99	8.3%
nancial District #10	63,486	8.1%	97	8.1%
nancial District #11	138,835	17.7%	173	14.5%
nancial District #12	31,127	4.0%	55	4.6%
tal	783,674	100.2%	1195	100.2%

Table 6

Miles Driven Per Year

Miles Driven Per Year	Respondents	Percentage
0-4,999	119	10.0%
5000-9,999	278	23.3%
10,000-14,999	350	29.3%
15,000-19,999	210	17.6%
More than 20,000	212	17.7%
None or not reported	26	2.2%
Total	1195	100.0%

Table 7

Number of Vehicles Owned

Number of Vehicles	Respondents	Percentage
1	207	17.3%
2	477	39.9%
3	247	20.7%
4	97	8.1%
5	54	4.5%
More than 5	71	5.9%
None or not reported	42	3.5%
Total	1195	99.9%

Interstate Highway System

The first three items on the questionnaire asked whether the respondent supported completion of the Interstate Highway System in Montana, whether the state should initiate a special program to fund completion of the Interstate, and how much additional gas tax respondents were willing to pay to fund completion of the Interstate system. Tables 8 and 9 show overwhelming support for completing the Interstate system in each of Montana's commission and financial districts. Statewide, 79% responded affirmatively when asked whether they favored completion of the Interstate system in Montana; 14.8% opposed completing the system. The strongest support for completing the Interstate system was registered in commission districts #2 and #5, headquartered in Butte and Billings, along the southern border of Montana and the route of I-90. The same pattern of response was shown in the financial districts: those districts along highways I-90 and I-94 were significantly more supportive of completing the Interstate system than were other areas of Montana. Financial district #5 in central Montana (Lewistown area) was the least supportive area, with only 57.7% favoring completion of the Interstate system.

The last item on the questionnaire provided space for comments by respondents; many of those comments supported completion of the Interstate system. An individual from the Butte area offered these thoughts about the Interstate system and the raising of taxes for its completion:

Table 8

Question #1: When the Interstate Highway System was started, Montana was targeted to have 1,196 miles of Interstate of which 1,080 have been completed. Do you favor completing construction of the Interstate Highway System in Montana?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Yes	77.2%	82.5%	74.0%	72.0%	88.2%	79.0%
No	16.9%	10.4%	18.3%	21.7%	7.5%	14.8%
No Opinion	5.9%	7.1%	7.6%	6.3%	4.4%	6.2%
	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Table 9

Question #1: When the Interstate Highway System was started, Montana was targeted to have 1,196 miles of Interstate of which 1,080 have been completed. Do you favor completing construction of the Interstate Highway System in Montana?

Response	Financial District												Statewide Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	
Yes	78.0%	73.1%	67.2%	84.2%	57.7%	74.4%	71.4%	78.7%	82.8%	83.5%	88.4%	87.3%	79.0%
No	16.3%	23.9%	25.0%	8.8%	38.5%	16.7%	24.3%	14.0%	11.1%	9.3%	7.5%	7.3%	14.8%
No Opinion	5.7%	3.0%	7.8%	7.0%	3.8%	8.9%	4.3%	7.3%	6.1%	7.2%	4.1%	5.4%	6.2%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	141	67	64	57	26	168	70	178	99	97	173	55	1195

> I understand that Montana is behind schedule on construction of the Interstate highway system. I believe that it is of the utmost importance that we complete that system on schedule, if possible. And, I am willing to pay additional taxes toward that end. After that project is completed, I would be willing to pay more than the present tax for reconstruction, maintenance, etc. However, the reconstruction, maintenance tax should not be as much as that for completion of the Interstate highway system. Taxes, once implemented, are seldom reduced or cancelled. This results in a reluctance on the part of the public to allow new taxes (when we have a choice). Implement a tax, use it for the stated purpose, then drop the tax and then, we the public, will respect and help you.

From Yellowstone County came these remarks:

> A completed Interstate system seems to be a major concern in this urban area, but the future of Montana should definitely be the guide to the direction of the Department of Highways. . . . Trade, urban development, tourism, safety, and intrastate commuting are major considerations for the future. I would like to see a comprehensive program developed for the future of our highways with financial support for new construction as appropriate.

There was also dissent. Suggested a Lake County resident:

> I feel the massive Interstate highway system is possibly becoming as obsolete as the large 'Detroit Gas Hog'. There seems to be a real need to evaluate the effects the current energy situation will have and try to plan our highway expansion in that light.

While the majority support completion of the Interstate system, only 38.7% support passage of a special tax on fuel with the revenue collected specially earmarked to fund the system's completion. The geographical response pattern to this question resembled that of the first question. The commission and financial

districts with Interstate highways were more willing to fund completion of the Interstate system with a special tax on fuel than were other areas of the state. The lowest score registered on this question came from financial district #1, the Polson-Kalispell-Libby area in northwest Montana, where only 27.7% supported the tax. See tables 10 and 11 for additional details.

Question 3 on the survey asked how much tax per gallon respondents would be willing to pay to fund completion of the Interstate system in Montana. The largest number (49.5%) preferred to pay nothing, although 30.2% said 1-2 cents per gallon, 11.6% said 3-5 cents per gallon, and 1.3% were willing to pay more than 5 cents per gallon. See table 12. Again, commission districts #2 and #5 in southern Montana registered more support for the Interstate program through a greater willingness to fund it in some amount. Statewide, the average amount of increased fuel tax all respondents were willing to pay to fund completion of the Interstate system was 1 cent per gallon.

The responses to the question about the Interstate system revealed a typical and troublesome pattern of public opinion: the public strongly endorsed the completion of the system but was reluctant to pay the fare. That reluctance creates problems for state policy makers because the state cannot expand or even maintain service levels, particularly in the face of current inflation rates, without increasing revenue.

Table 10

Question #2: Would you support passage of a special tax on fuel with the revenue collected specially earmarked to complete the Interstate Highway System in Montana?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Yes	32.8%	42.2%	39.6%	32.9%	47.8%	38.7%
No	61.9%	52.6%	53.2%	59.4%	48.2%	55.6%
No Opinion	5.3%	5.2%	7.3%	7.7%	4.0%	5.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Table 11

Question #2: Would you support passage of a special tax on fuel with the revenue collected specially earmarked to complete the Interstate Highway System in Montana?

Response	Financial District												Statewide Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	
Yes	27.7%	38.8%	35.9%	33.3%	30.8%	39.3%	40.0%	34.3%	42.4%	42.3%	47.4%	49.1%	38.7%
No	64.5%	52.2%	53.1%	56.1%	69.2%	54.8%	55.7%	62.4%	53.5%	51.5%	48.6%	47.3%	55.6%
No Opinion	7.8%	9.0%	10.9%	10.6%	0.0%	6.0%	4.3%	3.4%	4.0%	6.2%	4.1%	3.6%	5.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.1%	99.9%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%
N	141	67	64	57	26	168	70	178	99	97	173	55	1195

Table 12

Question #3: How much additional fuel tax would you be willing to pay to fund the completion of the Interstate Highway System in Montana?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Nothing	54.2%	46.0%	48.5%	52.4%	43.9%	49.5%
1-2 cents per gallon	26.0%	35.1%	26.8%	30.1%	36.0%	30.2%
3-5 cents per gallon	10.8%	10.8%	15.8%	7.0%	11.8%	11.6%
More than 5 cents per gal.	2.2%	.9%	1.3%	0.0%	.8%	1.3%
No Opinion	6.9%	7.1%	7.7%	10.5%	7.5%	7.6%
Total	100.1%	99.9%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.2%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Primary Highway System

Five questions explored attitudes toward the Primary Highway System. Question four asked how the Highway Department should approach the reconstruction of the system. reconstruct the system. As presented in tables 13 and 14, there was strong preference (58.9%) for reconstructing the system within the resources of the current federal aid/state program; 24.4% favored establishing a separate program to reconstruct the primary highways more quickly. The strongest support for establishing a separate program to reconstruct the primary highways came from financial districts along the Hi-line. Those districts in southern Montana that strongly supported the Interstate system did not rate reconstruction of the primary system as highly.

Several respondents commented on the primary system. An individual from Fergus County observed:

> Montana's primary highway system is in more need of improvement than the Interstate system. Effort should be concentrated there instead of worrying about the Interstate system. If the state is passing a fuel tax, let's use it to the benefit of the primary system.

Another Montanan from Blaine County stated:

> I would very much like to see the Interstate system completed but not at the expense of the primary and secondary system. The primary and secondary system has been neglected long enough . . . there should be more construction on the primary and secondary system where the traffic is.

Table 13

Question #4: Much of Montana's Primary Highway System which includes roads such as US 2, US 12, US 93, US 191, US 212, Montana 200 and others are quite old and in need of reconstruction. In your opinion, how should the Highway Department attempt to accomplish reconstruction of the Primary Highway System?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Establish a separate program for reconstruction at accelerated rate	28.8%	16.1%	29.4%	22.4%	21.1%	24.4%
Defer current maintenance and construction to reconstruct at accelerated rate	7.1%	5.2%	9.4%	7.7%	4.4%	6.8%
Reconstruct within resources of current federal aid/ state program	57.1%	65.9%	53.6%	60.1%	60.1%	58.9%
No Opinion	6.9%	12.8%	7.7%	9.8%	14.5%	9.8%
Total	99.9%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.1%	99.9%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Table 14

Question #4: Much of Montana's Primary Highway system which includes roads such as US 2, US 12, US 93, US 191, US 212, Montana 200, and others are quite old and in need of reconstruction. In your opinion, how should the Highway Department attempt to accomplish reconstruction of the Primary Highway System?

Response	Financial District												Statewide Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	
Establish separate program to reconstruct at accelerated rate	29.1%	41.8%	28.1%	17.5%	23.1%	24.4%	31.4%	26.4%	17.2%	14.4%	19.7%	25.5%	24.4%
Defer maintenance and construction to reconstruct at accelerated rate	5.0%	9.0%	9.4%	5.3%	7.7%	9.5%	5.7%	9.6%	5.1%	5.2%	4.6%	3.6%	6.8%
Reconstruct highways within resources of current federal aid/state program	59.6%	44.8%	53.1%	66.7%	57.7%	57.7%	60.0%	54.5%	65.7%	67.0%	60.1%	60.0%	58.9%
No Opinion	6.4%	4.5%	9.4%	10.5%	11.5%	8.4%	2.9%	9.6%	12.1%	13.4%	15.6%	10.9%	9.8%
Total	100.1%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%
N	141	67	64	57	26	168	70	178	99	97	173	55	1195

Two responses from Cascade County:

> At this time the primary highway system needs a bigger boost than the Interstate program.

> I live in Cascade county and I am very concerned at the alarming deterioration in most of the primary highways in north central Montana. Although the Interstate and some lightly traveled rural highways are in good shape, roads such as US 87, US 89, and Montana 200 are rapidly becoming worn out and obsolete. One can drive a hundred miles over these roads and see no sign of any reconstruction or maintenance, except temporary asphalt patches. If something major is not done soon, our roads will be in the same shape as the Milwaukee tracks.

Although several respondents commented on the need to reconstruct the Primary Highway System, 52.9% did not favor passage of a special tax on fuel to provide earmarked revenue for primary highway reconstruction. The strongest support for such a tax (50.0%) came from financial district #5 (Lewistown area). The Hi-line was more supportive of increased taxation for primary highways than were southern Montana counties (see tables 15 and 16).

Interestingly, the degree of support for adopting a specially earmarked tax for the Interstate or primary highway systems was equal. Both measures were supported by 38.7% of the motor vehicle owners, but their support varied geographically. As indicated in table 17, support for the Interstate Highway System came predominantly from southern Montana in commission districts #2 and #5. Support for the primary system came from commission districts #1, #3, and #4, covering the northern part of the state, the area without many miles of Interstate highway. As one respondent

Table 15

Question #5: Would you support passage of a special tax on fuel with the revenue collected specially earmarked for reconstruction of the Primary Highway System in Montana?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Yes	38.1%	32.2%	46.4%	41.3%	36.4%	38.7%
No	55.6%	56.9%	45.1%	48.3%	55.7%	52.9%
No Opinion	6.4%	10.9%	8.5%	10.5%	7.9%	8.4%
Total	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Table 16

Question #5: Would you support passage of a special tax on fuel with the revenue collected specially earmarked for reconstruction of the Primary Highway System in Montana?

Response	Financial District												Statewide Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	
Yes	36.2%	49.3%	43.8%	36.8%	50.0%	45.2%	35.7%	39.3%	34.3%	29.9%	34.7%	41.8%	38.7%
No	58.9%	41.8%	45.3%	50.9%	42.3%	47.0%	55.7%	53.4%	52.5%	61.9%	57.8%	49.1%	52.9%
No Opinion	5.0%	9.0%	10.9%	12.3%	7.7%	7.8%	8.6%	7.3%	13.1%	8.3%	7.5%	9.1%	8.4%
Total	100.1%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	141	67	64	57	26	168	70	178	99	97	173	55	1195

Table 17

Questions #2 & #5: Support for a special tax to complete the Interstate Highway System (#2) and a special tax to reconstruct the Primary Highway System (#5).

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Yes--Question #2	32.8%	42.2%	39.6%	32.9%	47.8%	38.7%
Yes--Question #5	38.1%	32.2%	46.4%	41.3%	36.4%	38.7%
Difference: Interstate in excess of Primary	-5.3%	+10.0%	-6.8	-8.4%	+11.4%	-0.0%
No--Question #2	61.4%	52.6%	53.2%	59.4%	48.2%	55.6%
No--Question #5	55.6%	56.9%	45.1%	48.3%	55.7%	52.9%
Difference: Interstate in excess of Primary	+6.3%	-4.3%	+8.1%	+11.1%	-7.5%	+2.7%
No Opinion	Reported on tables 10 and 15.					
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

from Musselshell County pointed out:

> Fixing the Interstate doesn't help us because we don't use the Interstate where we live. Fix up some of those primary roads.

The response to the question asking how much respondents were willing to pay to reconstruct the primary system was similar to that for the Interstate system--most, 47.5%, preferred to pay nothing. Almost 31% were willing to pay 1-2 cents per gallon to reconstruct the primary highways, and 10.6% were willing to pay 3-5 cents per gallon. Statewide, the average amount respondents were willing to pay was 1 cent per gallon. See table 18.

When asked how they would prefer to implement an increase in the fuel tax for the primary system, the overwhelming majority (79.2%) chose a vote of the people; only 14.2% chose legislative action. All commission districts were similar in their response to this question, except that district #2 in southwest Montana was less supportive of legislative action than were the others. See table 19.

The question inquiring how long a special fuel tax for reconstructing the primary system should be enacted drew a more even division of replies than many in the survey (table 20), with 35.6% calling for a temporary tax until reconstruction is completed, 29.5% preferring a temporary tax for a fixed time but renewable if necessary, and 15.7% choosing a non-renewable temporary tax for a fixed time. Almost 15% of the sample did not register an opinion. Only 4.4% called for a permanent tax. There were no significant differences of opinion by commission or financial district.

Table 18

Question #6: How much additional fuel tax would you be willing to pay to fund reconstruction of Montana's Primary Highway System?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Nothing	48.9%	49.8%	42.1%	42.7%	51.8%	47.5%
1-2 cents per gallon	30.5%	31.2%	29.7%	35.7%	28.9%	30.8%
3-5 cents per gallon	11.2%	6.2%	15.8%	10.5%	8.8%	10.6%
More than 5 cents per gallon	1.4%	.9%	1.7%	1.4%	.8%	1.3%
No Opinion	8.2%	11.8%	10.6%	9.8%	9.7%	9.8%
Total	100.2%	99.9%	99.9%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Table 19

Question #7: If a proposal were to be developed to increase the fuel tax with the revenue collected specially earmarked to reconstruct the Primary Highway System, how would you prefer to see it implemented?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Through a vote of the state legislature	14.8%	11.8%	16.6%	12.6%	14.0%	14.2%
Through a vote of the people	79.4%	81.5%	77.9%	81.8%	76.8%	79.2%
No Opinion	5.9%	6.6%	5.5%	5.6%	9.2%	6.5%
Total	100.1%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Table 20

Question #8: If a special fuel tax were enacted to provide funds for reconstructing the Primary Highway System in Montana, how long should the tax be in effect?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Temporary--until reconstruction completed	36.8%	33.6%	33.6%	38.5%	35.5%	35.6%
Temporary--for a fixed period of time & renewable	27.8%	32.2%	29.4%	30.1%	29.4%	29.5%
Temporary--not to exceed a fixed period of time	15.9%	16.1%	17.0%	14.7%	14.5%	15.7%
Permanent	4.5%	3.3%	5.1%	2.8%	5.3%	4.4%
No Opinion	15.1%	14.7%	14.9%	14.0%	15.3%	14.9%
Total	100.1%	99.9%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.1%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

The response to questions concerning the primary system was similar to that recorded for the Interstate system. In neither case did a majority support additional taxation to upgrade the highways. Northern Montana tended to support the primary system while southern Montana supported the Interstate system.

Maintenance

Questions 9 through 12 asked about the adequacy of road maintenance and snowplowing and respondents' willingness to pay additional fuel tax to support them. In general, road maintenance and snowplowing were favorably evaluated by Montana drivers. A rating of good or excellent was given by 36.6% of those who answered the question, "How well maintained are the highways in the area where you live?" Another 27.3% said average; 34.0% rated road maintenance fair or poor. Commission district #2 (southwestern Montana) and financial district #7 (Helena area) gave the most favorable rating for road maintenance. The lowest scores were registered in commission district #3 (north-central Montana) and financial district #3 (Wolf Point area). In general, western Montanans rated road maintenance higher than did eastern Montanans. See tables 21 and 22.

Winter snowplowing was better regarded than road maintenance; 62.7% called it either good or excellent and only 18.6% fair or poor. Commission district #2 provided the most favorable rating (71.1%), while in commission district #5 only 54.8% rated snowplowing either good or excellent. See tables 23 and 24.

Table 21

Question #9: In your opinion, how well maintained are the highways in the area where you live?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Excellent	6.9%	10.4%	2.6%	5.6%	4.8%	6.1%
Good	31.7%	40.3%	26.4%	25.9%	26.3%	30.5%
Average	24.6%	27.5%	28.5%	30.1%	28.5%	27.3%
Fair	19.3%	14.7%	20.4%	16.1%	21.1%	18.7%
Poor	16.1%	5.7%	18.7%	19.6%	16.7%	15.3%
No Opinion	1.4%	1.4%	3.4%	2.8%	2.7%	2.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.1%	100.1%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Table 22

Question #9: In your opinion, how well maintained are the highways in the area where you live?

Response	Financial District												Statewide Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	
Excellent	3.5%	6.0%	4.7%	13.5%	11.5%	1.2%	18.6%	6.7%	11.1%	7.2%	3.5%	9.1%	6.1%
Good	24.1%	22.4%	21.9%	24.6%	34.6%	28.0%	44.3%	34.3%	36.4%	44.3%	28.3%	20.0%	30.5%
Average	20.6%	25.4%	26.6%	31.6%	34.6%	29.8%	20.0%	28.7%	29.3%	27.8%	28.9%	27.3%	27.3%
Fair	19.9%	22.4%	21.1%	12.3%	11.5%	19.6%	11.4%	20.8%	14.1%	16.5%	22.0%	18.2%	18.7%
Poor	31.2%	22.4%	23.4%	21.1%	7.7%	17.9%	4.3%	7.9%	7.1%	4.1%	15.0%	21.8%	15.3%
No Opinion	.7%	1.5%	1.6%	7.0%	0.0%	3.6%	1.4%	1.7%	2.0%	0.0%	2.3%	3.6%	2.2%
	100.0%	100.1%	100.1%	100.1%	99.9%	100.1%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%
N	141	67	64	57	26	168	70	178	99	97	173	55	1195

Table 23

Question #10: In your opinion, how well are the highways plowed of snow during the winter in the area where you live?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Excellent	16.9%	20.9%	17.9%	18.2%	14.9%	17.6%
Good	46.6%	50.2%	38.7%	52.4%	39.9%	45.1%
Average	17.5%	11.8%	20.4%	12.6%	15.4%	16.1%
Fair	10.3%	8.1%	11.1%	11.9%	14.0%	11.0%
Poor	6.1%	8.5%	7.7%	3.5%	11.8%	7.6%
No Opinion	2.6%	.5%	4.3%	1.4%	4.0%	2.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Table 24

Question #10: In your opinion, how well are the highways plowed of snow during the winter in the area where you live?

Response	Financial District												Statewide Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	
Excellent	10.6%	20.9%	15.6%	12.3%	34.6%	16.7%	35.7%	15.2%	17.2%	24.7%	13.3%	20.0%	17.6%
Good	50.4%	32.8%	46.9%	54.4%	57.7%	42.3%	42.9%	46.1%	47.5%	50.5%	39.3%	41.8%	45.1%
Average	17.7%	25.4%	14.1%	15.8%	3.8%	17.9%	10.0%	19.1%	16.2%	9.3%	15.0%	16.4%	16.1%
Fair	12.1%	14.9%	17.2%	8.8%	3.8%	9.5%	5.7%	10.1%	8.1%	9.3%	15.6%	9.1%	11.0%
Poor	6.4%	4.5%	4.7%	5.3%	0.0%	8.9%	4.3%	6.7%	10.1%	6.2%	12.7%	9.1%	7.6%
No Opinion	2.8%	1.5%	1.6%	3.5%	0.0%	4.8%	1.4%	2.8%	1.0%	0.0%	4.0%	3.6%	27.%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.1%	99.9%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	100.1%
N	141	67	64	57	26	168	70	178	99	97	173	55	1195

Interestingly enough, an individual's opinion of the 55-mph speed limit has a statistically significant relationship with his assessment of highway maintenance and snowplowing. People who support the 55-mph speed limit tend to rate the adequacy of road maintenance and snowplowing substantially higher than do those who do not favor the speed limit. See tables 25 and 26.

Considering the relatively high marks given to maintenance and snowplowing, it's probably not surprising that few people supported a fuel tax increase for these services. When satisfied with a service, few will vote to spend more on it. Fewer than 20% of the sample supported a fuel tax increase to raise additional money for maintenance and snowplowing. The average amount all respondents statewide were willing to pay in fuel tax for these services was .38 cents per gallon. Over 66% preferred to spend nothing. See tables 27 and 28.

In summary, Montanans are generally satisfied with the level of highway maintenance and snowplowing provided by the state in the areas where they live and do not wish to have their taxes increased to fund improvements in these services.

Program Reductions and Alternative Revenue Sources

In response to question 13 ("If it becomes necessary to reduce the Highway Department's budget because of insufficient revenue, in your opinion, which activity should have its budget cut?"), travel promotion was targeted by 45.0%; an equal, across-the-board cut was favored by 25.8% (table 29).

Table 25

Cross Tabulation: Attitudes Toward Highway Maintenance and the 55-MPH Speed Limit

n #9: In your , how well main- are the highways area where you	Question #19: Do you support the 55-MPH speed limit?		
	YES	NO	STATEWIDE
lent	7.2%	5.4%	6.4%
	34.3%	27.4%	31.3%
ge	27.7%	27.4%	27.6%
	16.5%	22.4%	19.1%
	14.3%	17.4%	15.7%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%
	642	500	1142

Opinion" responses excluded

Table 26

Cross Tabulation: Attitudes Toward Highway Snowplowing and the 55-MPH Speed Limit

tion #10: In your ion how well are the ways plowed of snow ng the winter in the where you live?	Question #19: Do you support the 55-MPH speed limit?		
	YES	NO	STATEWIDE
cellent	20.0%	15.9%	18.2%
od	48.1%	43.8%	46.2%
erage	14.8%	18.1%	16.3%
ir	9.7%	13.3%	11.3%
or	7.3%	8.9%	8.6%
tal	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%
	640	496	1136

No Opinion" responses excluded

Table 27

Question #11: Would you support raising the fuel tax to increase the amount of funds available for highway maintenance and snowplowing?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Yes	23.5%	22.7%	17.0%	12.6%	18.9%	19.9%
No	70.1%	69.7%	71.9%	73.4%	71.1%	71.0%
No Opinion	6.4%	7.6%	11.1%	14.0%	10.1%	9.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Table 28

Question #12: How much additional fuel tax would you be willing to pay to fund highway maintenance and snowplowing?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Nothing	65.3%	65.4%	66.8%	66.4%	68.9%	66.4%
1-2 cents per gallon	23.5%	22.2%	19.1%	11.2%	16.2%	19.5%
3-5 cents per gallon	2.9%	.5%	1.7%	4.2%	2.1%	2.3%
More than 5 cents per gallon	.8%	.9%	0%	0%	0%	.5%
No Opinion	7.4%	10.9%	12.3%	18.2%	12.7%	11.3%
Total	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Question #13: If it becomes necessary to reduce the Highway Department's budget because of insufficient revenue, in your opinion, which activity should have its budget cut?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
New highway construction	11.4%	14.2%	12.8%	7.7%	7.5%	11.0%
Travel Promotion	47.1%	45.5%	40.4%	48.3%	44.1%	45.0%
General Road Maintenance	.3%	0%	.9%	0%	.4%	.3%
Snow Plowing	.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Sign Maintenance	3.2%	1.9%	3.0%	2.8%	1.8%	2.6%
Cut everything equally across the board	24.1%	26.1%	22.1%	26.6%	31.7%	25.8%
No Opinion	14.0%	12.4%	21.3%	14.7%	14.6%	15.3%
Total	100.1%	100.1%	100.1%	100.1%	100.1%	100.0%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Over 15% of the respondents had no opinion. Fewer than 1% suggested cuts in road maintenance or snowplowing. There were no significant geographical differences in the response to this question.

A similar question asked about cuts in activities funded by the highway earmarked account but outside the Highway Department, such as the Highway Patrol and aid to local government. The largest number of respondents (42.5%) preferred to reduce aid to local government in the event of a revenue shortfall in the highway earmarked account. Commission districts #1 and #2 in western Montana favored reducing aid to local government more than did eastern Montana districts. Over one quarter of all respondents offered no opinion. Reducing the budget of the Highway Patrol was the least-favored option, selected by only 10.9% of the respondents (see table 30). Table 31 is a cross tabulation of attitudes toward program reductions and the 55-mph speed limit. People who disapproved of the 55-mph speed limit were less likely to support reducing aid to local government and more in favor of reducing the budget of the Highway Patrol.

Many respondents offered comments on how the Highway Department could stretch its revenue in the face of ever-tightening fiscal constraints. From Lewis and Clark County came these suggestions:

> Use city and county prison inmates on work programs for highway clean-up and minor maintenance projects to reduce personnel costs within the department.

Question #14: At the present time, funds from the highway fuel tax accounts are used to support some highway related activities outside the Highway Dept. including operation of the Highway Patrol in the Dept. of Justice and Highway Traffic Safety Division in the Dept. of Community Affairs. In addition, $6.5 million per year is distributed to local governments for streets and roads. In the event of a revenue shortfall, it may become necessary to reduce funding to some of these areas. In your opinion, which program should be cut?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Highway Patrol Operations	11.4%	11.4%	7.2%	14.7%	11.0%	10.9%
Highway Traffic Safety Functions	14.3%	18.0%	17.9%	20.3%	16.7%	18.4%
Aid to local governments	47.9%	43.1%	42.6%	39.2%	35.1%	42.5%
No Opinion	21.5%	27.4%	32.3%	25.9%	27.3%	28.2%
Total	100.1%	99.9%	100.0%	100.1%	100.1%	100.0%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

Table 31

Cross Tabulation: Attitudes Toward Program Reductions and the 55-MPH Speed Limit

tion #14: In the t of a revenue short- which program sup- ed by the highway tax accounts ld be cut?	Question #19: Do you support the 55-MPH Speed Limit?		
	YES	NO	STATEWIDE
hway Patrol	11.4%	20.3%	15.3%
hway Traffic Safety	22.2%	29.5%	25.4%
to Local Governments	66.4%	50.3%	59.3%
tal	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%
	473	370	843

"No Opinion" responses excluded

> All highway rest areas should be maintained by private firms bidding on contracts on a yearly basis.

Several individuals offered their opinions regarding the department's operating efficiency and need to tighten its belt. A Missoula County resident observed:

> Most Montana citizens are well aware of the effects of inflation. We hear the contention that if the various government levels had to conduct their operations such as private businesses must do to survive, then private citizens' support of government would be more positive versus the present negativism.

A respondent from Gallatin County stated:

> Learn to do like the rest of us, work smart and don't waste. Live on what you've got the best you can. When things get tough, I cannot go out and compensate with more taxes, that has been government's response for too long. You've killed the goose.

From Sanders and Meagher counties:

> Your agency is experiencing the dollar crunch not unlike any other segment of the state, nation, or private individual. More money is not the only solution. You must become more efficient and use the bucks you have to the greatest advantage. Consider such things as reducing training, travel, special equipment, reduce your heavy overhead organization, get more dollars to the ground where the work is . . . In other words, look within your agency for partial solutions before you look for more tax money. Efficiency is the place to start.
>
> I believe your department like any other business could use some tough times just to prove to yourselves that you can get by on less if you have to.

Not all of the commentary carried a tone of admonition. From Lewis and Clark County:

> I drive about 10,000 miles per year in southwestern Montana. I have been driving this area since 1928 and compared with 1928 Montana has come a long way. We have wonderful roads and good maintenance.

And, finally, from Toole and Yellowstone County residents:

> I would like to say the highways in our area are especially well maintained and if this is a barometer for the maintenance department all over Montana, it is one of the few government operations that is run with excellence.
>
> First of all, keep up the good work! Since Montana is so big our roads are understandably scattered far and wide. That, and a small tax paying population makes your job a rough one indeed.

Questions 15 and 16, reported in tables 32 and 33, were adopted from the Montana Futures Survey conducted by the Office of the Governor in 1977. If the federal government reduces its support to the Montana highway systems, 39.4% of the Montanans surveyed prefer to use what money is available for maintenance. Four years ago, when the Montana Futures Survey was conducted, only 29% were similarly inclined. In the current survey, 29.5% favored sustaining the maintenance effort as well as continuing a limited construction program. Four years ago, this approach received a much-higher 46% rating.

The question asking about the possibility of raising funds by either fuel tax increases or bonding brought similar results. Four years ago, respondents to the Montana Futures Survey selected increasing fuel taxes (41%) and issuing state bonds (41%) equally in preference to issuing local bonds (18%). Today, increasing fuel taxes was selected by only 25.9%, while issuing bonds to raise revenue retained the same general level of support it had four years ago.

Table 32

Question #15: If the federal government reduces the amount of money they spend supporting the Montana Highway System, which of the following actions should the State of Montana take?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Use available money for maintenance only	42.2%	44.1%	37.4%	37.8%	33.3%	39.4%
Support maintenance level plus limited construction by raising additional money	29.4%	28.9%	27.7%	32.2%	30.3%	29.5%
Continue maintenance and construction at current levels by raising additional money	18.8%	17.5%	25.5%	18.2%	19.7%	20.0%
No Opinion	9.5%	9.5%	9.4%	11.9$	16.7%	11.1%
Total	99.9%	99.9%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%
N	377	211	235	143	228	1194

Question #16: If the state must raise additional money to support the Montana Highway program, which method would you most prefer?

Response	Commission District #1	#2	#3	#4	#5	Statewide Totals
Raise state fuel taxes	27.3%	21.8%	26.4%	28.0%	25.4%	25.9%
Sell state level bonds for financing	34.2%	38.4%	34.0%	30.1%	30.3%	33.7%
Sell local level bonds for financing	19.1%	17.5%	14.9%	16.8%	14.5%	16.8%
No Opinion	19.4%	22.3%	24.7%	25.2%	29.9%	23.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.1%	100.0%
N	377	211	235	143	228	1194

Table 34 gives the response to question 17, regarding two methods of gas taxation. The fixed price per gallon was favored by 68.5%, versus 12.3% who supported the variable, fixed-percentage-of-selling-price method. The results did not vary significantly by geographic area.

Probably no single topic generated as much respondent interest and comment as the idea of alternative methods of financing the state highway system. Several examples are listed below, the first three from Gallatin, Jefferson, and Flathead counties:

> From June first through September first I would like to see a 5-6 cent tax increase on gasoline. Tourism being one of Montana's main sources of revenue could help defray the expense of highway expenditures.
>
> Whether they drive or not all residents of Montana derive benefit from state highways and roads. For this reason, I feel highway construction and maintenance should receive support from the general fund which appears to be in good shape.
>
> Fuel tax is stupid. Gas costs way too much now. Who would be able to drive on new roads anyway? Remove prohibition on pot and tax it.

Other observations from citizens in Missoula, Ravalli, Lincoln, and Cascade counties:

> If the Montana Department of Highways needs more money for the highway system, I highly recommend that you people get your taxes from cigarettes and alcoholic bevereges. These two items are not a necessity.
>
> Why not get funds from the coal tax surplus to help on roads instead of adding to the already high fuel cost.

Table

Question #17: There are two basic approaches to fuel taxation. One method sets the tax at a fixed amount per gallon. The other method sets the tax at a fixed percentage of the selling price. Which method do you prefer?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Fixed amount per gallon	71.4%	68.7%	68.1%	65.0%	65.8%	68.5%
Fixed percentage of the selling price	9.8%	14.7%	11.9%	14.7%	13.2%	12.3%
No Opinion	18.8%	16.6%	20.0%	20.3%	21.1%	19.2%
Total	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

> Put a small fine on each driving ticket to add to the highway fund.
>
> I would like to see the state tax collected for every gallon sold regardless of use!

Finally, comments from Yellowstone, Pondera, and Flathead counties:

> To me, the appropriate place or source of highway construction funds is from a share of the 'Windfall Profits Tax' presently being confiscated by the federal government.
>
> Why not use oil and natural gas taxes to build roads. There are thousands of dollars coming in from that. Where is it going?
>
> I believe Montana should have a sales tax--being a tourist state. The money taken in could be used in different ways including highway maintenance and construction.

Mass Transit Systems and the 55-mph Speed Limit

The final substantive questions on the survey asked about attitudes toward use of highway fuel tax revenue for mass transit and support for the 55-mph speed limit.

Montanans are not disposed toward spending highway fuel tax revenue to build or operate mass transit systems in the state. Only 14.1% supported using highway funds for mass transit; 75.5% opposed such use. See table 35.

Montanans favor the 55-mph speed limit by a ratio of 54.8% in favor to 42.5% opposed and 2.7% undecided. Support for the 55-mph limit is greatest in western Montana and tends to progressively diminish to the east.

Question #18: In your opinion, should funds from the highway fuel tax account be used to build or operate mass transit systems in Montana?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Yes	18.0%	13.7%	10.6%	9.8%	14.0%	14.1%
No	73.3%	75.4%	78.3%	77.6%	75.0%	75.5%
No Opinion	8.7%	10.9%	11.0%	12.6%	11.0%	10.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.1%
N	378	211	235	143	228	1195

The greatest level of support is in the Missoula (65.2%) and Bozeman (60.8%) financial districts. The greatest opposition to the 55-mph limit is in the Wolf Point (#3) and Lewistown (#5) financial districts. See tables 36 and 37.

The number of vehicles people own and number of miles they drive each year is related to their attitudes toward the 55-mph limit. Generally speaking, the more vehicles people own, the greater their opposition to the 55-mph speed limit. The speed limit is supported by 63.4% of the people who own one vehicle but only 44.3% who own more than five motor vehicles. Likewise, the greater the annual mileage, the less support given the 55-mph speed limit. Only 36.4% of the people driving more than 20,000 miles per year supported the 55-mph speed limit, compared with 74.8% of the people who drive less than 5,000 miles per year. See tables 38 and 39.

Additional Comments

Almost 40% answered the last question, an open-ended request for additional comments, and mentioned a broad range of topics, many of which have already been discussed. Other concerns of the respondents had not been covered in the questionnaire. There were many remarks about truck traffic and the effect of trucks on road conditions, most of them similar to these from individuals from Park, Toole, and Missoula counties:

Question #19: Do you support the 55-MPH speed limit?

Response	Commission District					Statewide Totals
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	
Yes	62.3%	56.4%	54.0%	42.7%	49.1%	54.8%
No	36.1%	39.8%	43.0%	53.8%	47.8%	42.5%
No Opinion	1.6%	3.8%	3.0%	3.5%	3.1%	2.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	377	211	235	143	228	1194

Table 37

Question #19: Do you support the 55-MPH speed limit?

Response	Financial District												Statewide Total
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12	
Yes	59.6%	56.7%	40.6%	43.9%	46.2%	52.4%	59.4%	65.2%	53.5%	60.8%	49.1%	49.1%	54.8%
No	39.0%	41.8%	56.3%	49.1%	53.8%	44.6%	39.1%	33.1%	42.4%	35.1%	49.1%	43.6%	42.5%
No Opinion	1.4%	1.5%	3.1%	7.0%	0.0%	3.0%	1.4%	1.7%	4.0%	4.1%	1.8%	7.3%	2.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	141	67	64	57	26	168	69	178	99	97	173	55	1194

Table 38

Cross tabulation: Attitudes Toward the 55-MPH Speed Limit and the Number of Vehicles Owned

tion #19: Do you ort the 55-MPH d limit?	Number of Vehicles Owned						All Vehicle Owners Statewid
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	More Than Five	
Yes	63.4%	60.9%	51.2%	52.1%	37.7%	44.3%	56.4%
No	36.6%	38.1%	48.8%	47.9%	62.3%	55.7%	43.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N*	202	463	242	96	53	70	1126

* "No Opinion" responses excluded

Table 39

Cross Tabulation: Attitudes Toward the 55-MPH Speed Limit and the Number of Miles Driven Per Year

ion #19: Do you rt the 55-MPH limit?	Miles Driven Per Year					All Drivers Statewide
	0- 4,999	5,000- 9,999	10,000- 14,999	15,000- 19,999	More Than 20,000	
Yes	74.8%	64.2%	60.9%	49.3%	36.4%	56.5%
No	25.2%	35.8%	39.1%	50.7%	63.6%	43.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N*	115	271	338	207	209	1140

* "No Opinion" responses excluded

> Truck overload and truck speed are ruining our highways. The new smaller cars are not. We need enforcement in this line. We do not need triple trailer trucks which will be worse.
>
> Our area roads are incurring massive wear from trucks, principally grain export to the coast and Canada . . . The cost to maintain our Interstate system if we don't take care of it will be much more than the cost to build it today.
>
> Much of the deterioration of our Montana highways is done by the trucking fleets. I know they pay high taxes and have a strong lobby but for the percentage of wear they do and the roads they tear up, the average family car user is really getting it in the neck. We need some way to charge the heavy users for his proportionate share.

Many respondents commented about road conditions and, in particular, how road conditions in their part of the state were so much worse than elsewhere in Montana. No part of the state seemed immune. A comment from Richland County, for example:

> We in the East don't have much for roads so I do not favor additional fund raising. All the money is spent in the West to connect the bigger towns.

And, from Lincoln County on the opposite end of the state:

> As a log hauler in Lincoln County for 28 years I have paid a great amount of money for state and federal fuel and use taxes. I primarily use Highway 93 which is a sorry excuse for same between Stryker and the Canadian border. I think Lincoln and Flathead counties get shortchanged on highway construction.

A Stillwater County resident provided a system-wide view of Montana's road conditions.

> US 12 is no better than a cowpath, US 93 is for covered wagons. I-90 through Butte is like an old lady's washboard, I-90 from Wyoming to Hardin and US 212 from

> Crow Agency to Alzada should be given back to the indians, I-90 at Whitehall is like riding on the ocean in a hurricane, etc.

The survey questions dealing with fuel taxation prompted a large number of remarks. Here are comments from Cascade, McCone, and Carbon counties:

> Last year, as is the case this year, the state had an excess of over $20 million in state income taxes. It seems to me that the legislature should act on getting this money appropriated to help fund the state highway system. No one is in favor of more gasoline tax if there are alternatives.
>
> We prefer to be progressive and work for things such as highways but inflation will have to be brought under control first. We are senior citizens who cannot afford gas and fuel now. Any tax will only increase the problems of those least able to pay.
>
> I am a farmer and I have to buy gas for trucks to deliver sugar beets and other farm produce. I have to pay the tax on gas to do these things and it is very expensive. I realize prices are getting higher all the time but we farmers are not getting the price for our produce to keep up with the cost of everything else.

Another view of gas taxation was also evident, as indicated by these responses from Missoula and Musselshell counties:

> I prefer a tax on gas over other ways to raise money for highway construction and maintenance.
>
> I do not like the idea of spending more money for taxes. But, some roads in Montana are not safe to drive on at 55 mph. In that case, it's got to come from somewhere and a lot of people use the roads, so we may as well get it from gas money. Maybe then we will get discouraged and start saving gas.

In summary, we offer the thoughts of two Montanans on the effect of highways on Montana's future. The first comment

came from Carbon County, the second from Valley County:

> Let's keep Montana medieval. Keep your highway crews in their respective garages drinking coffee (which I am more than happy to pay for) instead of building new roads. New roads promote tourism, which, in turn, promotes more jobs, which brings more people who want better roads. Let's keep Montana the most sparsely populated state. We like it the way it is.
>
> If highways are not maintained, commerce will suffer. If commerce suffers, we all suffer.

APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS

COVER LETTER

THOMAS L. JUDGE, GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA
2701 PROSPECT
HELENA, MONTANA 59601

September 12, 1980

Dear Fellow Montanan:

The state Highway Department needs your help. Like yourself, the Highway Department has been pinched by inflation. The cost of building and maintaining roadways has substantially increased at a time when revenue from fuel tax receipts has been declining. As a motor vehicle owner, you support the operations of the Highway Department through the state and federal taxes paid on each gallon of fuel you purchase. Your views on how the department can redirect its program to improve services and control costs are especially important.

When the Interstate Highway System was started, it cost $175,000 to build a mile of four lane highway. Today, that same mile of road costs $2,646,000. Highway maintenance costs have also increased. Asphalt road mix to patch potholes has been increasing in cost almost 10% per year. And, the energy crisis has compounded the effects of inflation. The state's highway program is entirely funded from federal and state taxes on fuel. The decline in fuel consumption has reduced the amount of tax revenue available for the highway program even though the job of building and maintaining Montana's highways is bigger and more costly than ever before.

Attached you will find an opinion survey. Please assist the Highway Department by completing the enclosed questionnaire and returning it to the Department prior to October 5, 1980. The questionnaire is quite short -- only 26 questions -- and will take about ten minutes of your time. A self-addressed, postage paid, return envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Information gathered by this survey is to be used for planning purposes and all responses are strictly confidential.

Thank you for your time, help, and consideration. Your interest in strengthening the operation of the Montana Department of Highways is greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,

RONALD P. RICHARDS
Director

"AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY HANDICAPPED EMPLOYER"

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

THOMAS L. JUDGE, GOVERNOR
2701 PROSPEC
STATE OF MONTANA
HELENA, MONTANA 596

September 29, 1980

Dear Fellow Montanan:

Earlier this month, Mr. Ron Richards, Director of the Montana Department of Highways, sent you a letter and a questionnaire requesting your opinion on several issues related to fuel taxation and highway department operations to assist the Department to redirect its program. As a motor vehicle owner, you support the operations of the Highway Department through the state and federal taxes paid on each gallon of fuel you purchase. Your views on how the department can redirect its program to improve services and control costs are especially important.

If you have not already returned the questionnaire, please do so. The questionnnaire is quite short -- only 26 questions -- and will take about ten minutes to complete. For your convenience, another copy of the questionnaire and a self addressed, postage paid, return envelope are enclosed. Information gathered by this survey is to be used for planning purposes and all responses are strictly confidential.

Thank you for your time, help, and consideration. Your interest in strengthening the operation of the Montana Department of Highways is greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,

Rae Childs

RAE CHILDS, Chief
Information Bureau

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY HANDICAPPED EMPLOYER

QUESTIONNAIRE

Data Bank Number 1989

HIGHWAY SURVEY

Instructions: Please answer the questions on the questionnaire by placing a check mark or writing a word or two in the space provided. If you wish to make additional comments, please do so at the end of the questionnaire. All responses will be kept confidential.

Return the questionnaire in the enclosed return envelope to:

Highway Opinion Survey
Information Section
Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, Montana 59601

1. When the Interstate Highway System was started, Montana was targeted to have 1196 miles of Interstate of which 1080 have been completed. Do you favor completing construction of the Interstate Highway System in Montana? (Check One)

______ 1. Yes
______ 2. No
______ 3. No Opinion

2. Would you support passage of a special tax on fuel with the revenue collected specially earmarked to complete the Interstate Highway System in Montana? (Check One)

______ 1. Yes
______ 2. No
______ 3. No Opinion

3. How much additional fuel tax would you be willing to pay to fund the completion of the Interstate Highway System in Montana? (Check One)

______ 1. Nothing
______ 2. 1 cent per gallon
______ 3. 2 cents per gallon
______ 4. 3 cents per gallon
______ 5. 4 cents per gallon
______ 6. 5 cents per gallon
______ 7. 6 to 10 cents per gallon
______ 8. More than 10 cents per gallon
______ 9. No opinion

4. Much of Montana's Primary Highway System which includes roads such as US 2, US 12, US 93, US 191, US 212, Montana 200, and others are quite old and in need of reconstruction. In your opinion, how should the Highway Department attempt to accomplish reconstruction of the Primary Highway System? (Check One)

______ 1. Establish a separate program to provide for reconstruction at an accelerated rate.
______ 2. Defer current maintenance and construction projects to reconstruct the primary highways at an accelerated rate.
______ 3. Reconstruct the primary highways within the resources of the current federal aid/state program.
______ 4. No opinion

5. Would you support passage of a special tax on fuel with the revenue collected specially earmarked for reconstruction of the Primary Highway System in Montana? (Check One)

______ 1. Yes
______ 2. No
______ 3. No opinion

ow much additional fuel tax would you be willing to pay to fund reconstruction of Montana's Primary ghway System? (Check One)

__________ 1. Nothing
__________ 2. 1 cent per gallon
__________ 3. 2 cents per gallon
__________ 4. 3 cents per gallon
__________ 5. 4 cents per gallon
__________ 6. 5 cents per gallon
__________ 7. 6 to 10 cents per gallon
__________ 8. More than 10 cents per gallon
__________ 9. No opinion

If a proposal were to be developed to increase the fuel tax with the revenue collected specially earmarked to reconstruct the Primary Highway System, how would you prefer to see it implemented? (Check One)

__________ 1. Through a vote of the state legislature
__________ 2. Through a vote of the people
__________ 3. No opinion

If a special fuel tax were enacted to provide funds for reconstructing the Primary Highway System in Montana, how long should the tax be in effect? (Check One)

__________ 1. Temporary — until reconstruction is completed
__________ 2. Temporary — for a fixed period of time such as two or four years and then renewable
__________ 3. Temporary — not to exceed a fixed period of time such as ten years
__________ 4. Permanent
__________ 5. No opinion

In your opinion, how well maintained are the highways in the area where you live? (Check One)

__________ 1. Excellent
__________ 2. Good
__________ 3. Average
__________ 4. Fair
__________ 5. Poor
__________ 6. No opinion

In your opinion, how well are the highways plowed of snow during the winter in the area where you live? (Check One)

__________ 1. Excellent
__________ 2. Good
__________ 3. Average
__________ 4. Fair
__________ 5. Poor
__________ 6. No opinion

Would you support raising the fuel tax to increase the amount of funds available for highway maintenance and snow plowing? (Check One)

__________ 1. Yes
__________ 2. No
__________ 3. No opinion

How much additional fuel tax would you be willing to pay to fund highway maintenance and snow plowing? (Check One)

__________ 1. Nothing
__________ 2. 1 cent per gallon
__________ 3. 2 cents per gallon
__________ 4. 3 cents per gallon
__________ 5. 4 cents per gallon
__________ 6. 5 cents per gallon
__________ 7. 6 to 10 cents per gallon
__________ 8. More than 10 cents per gallon
__________ 9. No opinion

If it becomes necessary to reduce the Highway Department's budget because of insufficient revenue, in your opinion, which activity should have its budget cut? (Check One)

____________ 1. New highway construction
____________ 2. Travel promotion
____________ 3. General road maintenance
____________ 4. Snow plowing
____________ 5. Sign maintenance
____________ 6. Cut everything equally across the board
____________ 7. No opinion

At the present time, funds from the highway fuel tax accounts are used to support some highway related activities outside the Highway Department including operation of the Highway Patrol in the Department of Justice and Highway Traffic Safety Division in the Department of Community Affairs. In addition, $6.5 million per year is distributed to local governments for streets and roads. In the event of a revenue shortfall, it may become necessary to reduce funding to some of these areas. In your opinion, which program should be cut? (Check One)

____________ 1. Highway Patrol Operations
____________ 2. Highway Traffic Safety Functions
____________ 3. Aid to Local Governments
____________ 4. No opinion

If the federal government reduces the amount of money they spend supporting the Montana Highway System, which of the following actions should the state of Montana take? (Check One)

____________ 1. Use what money is available for maintenance only
____________ 2. Support current maintenance level plus limited construction by raising additional money
____________ 3. Continue maintenance and construction at current levels by raising additional money
____________ 4. No opinion

If the state must raise additional money to support the Montana Highway program, which method would you most prefer? (Check One)

____________ 1. Raise state fuel taxes
____________ 2. Sell state level bond issues to finance the program
____________ 3. Sell local level bond issues to finance the program in that locality
____________ 4. No opinion

There are two basic approaches to fuel taxation. One method sets the tax at a fixed amount per gallon. The other method sets the tax at a fixed percentage of the selling price. Which method do you prefer? (Check One)

____________ 1. Fixed amount per gallon
____________ 2. Fixed percentage of the selling price
____________ 3. No opinion

In your opinion, should funds from the highway fuel tax account be used to build or operate mass transit systems in Montana? (Check One)

____________ 1. Yes
____________ 2. No
____________ 3. No opinion

Do you support the 55 MPH speed limit? (Check One)

____________ 1. Yes
____________ 2. No
____________ 3. No opinion

ckground

). What type of motor vehicle is used as your principle family automobile? (Fill in the blank spaces)

____________ Year
____________ Make
____________ Model
____________ Don't own a motor vehicle

. How many cars and pick-up trucks do you own? (Fill in the blank space with a number)

____

. Approximately how many miles do you drive each year? (Check One)

____________ 1. 0-4,999 miles
____________ 2. 5,000-9,999 miles
____________ 3. 10,000-14,999 miles
____________ 4. 15,000-19,999 miles
____________ 5. More than 20,000 miles

. In what county do you live? (Fill in the blank space)

____

Do not write in this space
Data Processing Purposes only

________ CD ________ FD

If you have any additional comments, please use the space below.